

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE  
OF VIET MINH LEADERS

Seventeen biographic sketches

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST TRAINING AND  
EXPERIENCE OF VIET MINH LEADERS

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)\* presents itself as a spontaneous national liberation movement. Nevertheless 12 of its 17 key leaders were trained by the Comintern in Moscow, Paris, Yenan or Canton, some as early as 1920. The five of its key leaders who later were brought into the movement as patriotic hostages of respectability soon came under the control of the dominant Comintern-trained clique.

HO chi Minh, the leading figure in the DRV, was the first to receive Communist training abroad. In the period 1911 to 1925 HO was in France and the USSR, and participated in the early conferences of the Third International. In 1925 he went to China as a translator for Borodin, the leading Comintern agent for the Far East. HO himself became a member of the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern.

For the past three years there have been unconfirmed but persisting reports that HO is dead. Other reports are that TRUONG Chinh,

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\* The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) is the creation of the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnam Independence League). The league is more commonly referred to as the Viet Minh.

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who trained under HO in China before becoming his chief lieutenant, has now assumed active direction of DRV affairs. Nevertheless, whether HO is alive or dead, he remains the rallying point for the Viet Minh movement and the popular symbol of national liberation and resistance to the French, even among non-Viet Minh adherents.

In addition to leaders in the DRV Government, prominent members of the Dang Lao Dong (Workers Party), whose organization parallels the government, have been active in the international Communist movement. Some hold positions in both government and party hierarchies.

Viet Minh Leaders:

Foreign Travel and Training Under CP Auspices

NAME	USSR			FRANCE	CHINA			
	Training	Conferences	Visits	Communist Activities (Misc.)	Training		Conferences	
					Yenan	Canton a/	Kwangsi b/	Others c/
1. HO chi Minh (NGUYEN ai Quoc)	X	X		X		X	X	
2. TRUONG Chinh (DANG xuan Khu)					X	X	X	X
3. VO nguyen Giap			X?		X	X	X	X
4. DUONG duc Hien								X
5. HOANG quoc Viet								X
6. HOANG van Hoan d/		X?					X	X
7. LE dinh Tham, Dr.		X						X
8. LE Duan	X?							
9. NGUYEN Khanh Tuan	X			X				
10. NGUYEN luong Bang e/						X		X
11. NGUYEN van Tao			X?	X				
12. NGUYEN xuan Thuy			X					X
13. PHAM ba Truc								
14. PHAM van Dong	X?			X			X	
15. PHAN Anh								
16. PHAN ke Toai								
17. TON duc Thang				X				X

Notes to Table

- a. HO's school for training Vietnam emigres and orienting them toward Communism, reportedly maintained in Canton in about 1925.
- b. Kwangsi conference in 1941 when Viet Minh was organized.
- c. Includes trips to China to obtain DRV aid; also includes Peiping Peace Conference in October 1952.
- d. Currently ambassador to Peiping.
- e. Currently ambassador to Moscow.

1. HO CHI MINH (The Enlightened One; aka NGUYEN AI QUOC; real name believed to be NGUYEN VAN THANH) is the President and Premier of the DRV. Of even greater importance, he is the symbol of independence to most Vietnamese.

The background of the man is confused by questions, speculations and rumors. Is HO the NGUYEN ai Quoc who was reported to have died in 1932? Whoever he is, is he still alive? NGUYEN reportedly was born in the 1890's in Nghe An Province, North Vietnam. In 1911 he left Vietnam for France, where he earned his living as a writer and photographer. In Paris he came in contact with such leading leftist figures as Marcel Cachin and Charles Longuet, the grandson of Karl Marx. Already a revolutionary seeking his country's independence from France, he linked his aspirations to Communism and began to work with the Communist underground. At the Treaty of Versailles Conference he presented the Vietnamese hopes for independence to Woodrow Wilson, but without success.

From 1920 to 1925 he was a delegate to several Comintern conferences, including some in the USSR. In 1925 he accompanied Borodin, the Comintern delegate to the Kuomintang, to China, where he worked as his Chinese translator. Between 1925 and his arrest by the British in Hong Kong in 1931, he organized Vietnamese emigres and students into the nucleus of what was to become the Indochinese Communist Party. Important intermediary steps included the Viet Nam Cach Menh Thanh Nien Hoi (Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League) and the Communist Party of the South Seas, which later split into national groups including the

Indochinese Communist Party. He also spent some time in Thailand organizing the Vietnamese community there along the same lines. He was a member of the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern.

In 1932 NGUYEN was reported to have died in prison. It is believed now that actually he was released and that reports of his death were rumored deliberately. Nothing more was heard of him until 1941, when HO chi Minh appeared in Kwangsi Province, China. Whether HO claimed to be NGUYEN ai Quoc or whether his followers made the claim is not known; some current rumors hold that he is not the same man.

In Kwangsi HO organized the Viet Minh to unite all the groups fighting Japanese fascism and French colonialism into a movement for the independence of Vietnam. He then returned to Indochina to rally and work with guerrilla forces. In 1942 he again went to China, and there was jailed for a short time. In 1943 he once more returned to Indochina and to guerrilla activities, becoming the unquestioned leader of the movement and the symbol of liberation. In 1945, after the abdication of Emperor Bao Dai, he became President of the Provisional Government of Vietnam. He negotiated with the French for Vietnamese independence, making a trip to Fontainebleau, France, in 1946. When negotiations failed, he led the revolt against the French which is still raging. He retained throughout the negotiations his positions as President and Premier of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), which became the Communist-sponsored rival government to the French state.

No reputable Westerners have reported seeing HO since 1949, the year his voice was recognized definitely over the radio. Rumors have circulated that HO is dead and that his chief lieutenant TRUONG Chinh is now in charge. However, the DRV still issues orders in his name and Communist sources mention his occasional appearance. Whether he is dead or alive, whether he is the leader of the 1920's or someone else, the undeniable fact remains that HO chi Minh is, in the eyes of most Vietnamese, the popular symbol of liberation from colonial status and the leading patriot of his country.

2. DANG XUAN KHU (better known as TRUONG CHINH), secretary-general of the Lao Dong Party, is a top policy maker in DRV circles. Some reports say the entire DRV movement may be under his direction.

TRUONG was born in 1908 in Nam Dinh, North Vietnam. In 1928 he joined the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League and two years later helped found the Indochinese Communist Party. In 1931 he was arrested and imprisoned by the French. He was released in 1936 when the Popular Front Government came to power in France. He returned to Hanoi and continued to work and write for the Communist cause. He still has the reputation of being the leading theorist of Vietnamese Stalinist Communists.

In 1939 when World War II began, TRUONG was ordered underground by the party. He fled to China, where he reportedly went to the military school in Yen-an and supposedly met VO nguyen Giap. In 1941 he



went to Kwangsi, China, where he first met HO and studied under him. He is reported to have acted as political advisor to VO nguyen Giap during World War II. In August 1945 he called for a revolt against the Japanese. After the formation of the Provisional Government of Vietnam in 1945, he accepted one of the few official governmental positions he has held, becoming a member of the committee to draft a constitution for the DRV. When the Indochinese Communist Party was dissolved in 1945, he was named president of its successor, the Cultural Association for the Study of Marxism. He became secretary general of the Lao Dong Party when it was organized in 1951.

TRUONG Chinh is a leading spokesman of the internationalist wing of the party. However, he still believes in the inherent nationalistic character of the Vietnamese independence movement. He is a capable writer and speaker and may well be called the voice of the revolution. Coincident with reports of HO's death have been reports that TRUONG Chinh is now the leader. Friction between TRUONG and VO is known to constitute one of the major internal problems in the DRV leadership. For the most part TRUONG is content to remain in the background, but he retains his power.

3. VO NGUYEN GIAP, minister of defense and commander-in-chief of the Viet Minh Army, is one of the more dynamic figures of the DRV. He was born in 1912 in Nghe An Province, North Vietnam and first be-

came involved in Communist activities at the age of 14. He was arrested in 1928 and for these activities was released in 1933, whereupon he joined the Indochinese Communist Party. In the years following, he studied at the University of Hanoi, receiving Doctorate of Philosophy and Doctorate of Law degrees. He later taught at the Thanh Long School, a secondary school which the French have termed a hotbed of Communism.

VO fled to avoid arrest to Kwangsi, China, in 1939, leaving behind his family who were imprisoned and later died there. The circumstances of their death have made him fanatically anti-French and are offered as the reason for his uncontrollable nature. During this period he received military training, probably in Yenan. DRV sources have stated also that he went to Moscow during this period. In 1941 he organized guerrilla activities in North Vietnam. In August 1945 he was minister of interior in HO chi Minh's first government. While HO was at Fontainebleau in 1946, VO assumed almost dictatorial control of the government for the duration of HO's absence. In November 1946 he became minister of defense, a post which he relinquished for a while in 1947 and reassumed in 1948.

VO is an excellent orator and, because of his leadership of the army which has drawn praise from Communist and anti-Communist quarters alike, is second in popularity only to HO among the people. He is well informed on Communist doctrine, perhaps one of the best informed of the DRV hierarchy. He considers himself an international Communist, but he is by nature opposed to taking orders from anyone--including the Chinese and the Russians.

4. DUCNG DUC HIEN holds no official positions in the government. He is the founder and secretary-general of the Vietnamese Democratic Party, supposedly a non-Communist party cooperating with the Viet Minh. However, he is now only a figurehead, and real power is vested in his wife and two assistants, all Communists.

Hien was born in 1918 in Bac Ninh Province, North Vietnam. He was a law student at the University of Hanoi where he became involved in student activities and gained a place of prominence in student circles. In December 1944 he fled to China under pressure from the authorities, where he joined HO chi Minh, returning with him in 1945 after the defeat of the Japanese. He remains a sincere nationalist but is under constant surveillance by the DRV and so has little freedom of action.

5. HOANG QUOC VIET (aka HA BA CANG) is one of the most powerful leaders of the DRV, although he holds no official position in the government. As chairman of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor he exercises great influence in that field and dominates NGUYEN van Tao, the powerless minister of labor.

Viet was born in 1905 in Bac Ninh Province, North Vietnam, and entered the field of Communist agitation while a student in Haiphong in 1925. In 1928 he joined HO chi Minh's Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League. He has travelled to China on behalf of the DRV.

The labor leader is an ardent international Communist and decidedly anti-French. He is considered to be among the top five in the DRV leadership.

6. HOANG VAN HOAN is the first ambassador of the DRV to the Chinese Peoples Republic and, more important, a top member of the Politburo of the Lao Dong Party.

He was born in Nghe An Province, some time between 1900 and 1905. There are many conflicting reports about his early career. In a recent Communist-broadcast biography of him, he is said to have participated in riots as a student, worked with HO chi Minh and the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League, been in Russia and China and organized Communist activities in peasant and labor groups. Most reports of early Communist activities in Indochina do not refer to Hoan, possibly indicating that he used an alias or that the Communists are supplying him with a suitable background to build up his stature. Both are very common occurrences. It seems generally agreed that he worked with VO nguyen Giap in guerrilla activities in North Vietnam during the Japanese occupation.

In 1945 Hoan was appointed DRV deputy minister of national defense. In late 1946 or early 1947 he was appointed to the position of delegate of the Central DRV Government to Interzone IV, a key position because of the military importance of that area near Hanoi and Haiphong. In 1949 he was a member of the unrecognized DRV delegation to the United Nations Economic Committee for Asia and the Far East Conference in Singapore. From there he made a trip to Indonesia to confer with Communist leaders. He then headed a goodwill mission to Moscow, going on to Peiping to his assignment as ambassador, which he received on

on 23 December 1950. He is reported frequently absent from this post and engaged in special work for HO, such as speech writing.

7. Dr. LE DINH THAM, a prominent physician and Buddhist lay leader, is neither a Communist nor a revolutionary but appears to be duped by the "peace" activities of the Communists and the DRV. The Viet Minh apparently is giving him some recognition, without authority, to use his prominence in Buddhist circles to rally support for the Viet Minh. Dr. Tham was born in 1897 in Quang Nam Province, Central Vietnam. His official DRV positions include the chairmanship of the Resistance Executive Committee of Interzone V in South Vietnam and the chairmanship of several "peace conference" delegations. In the latter capacity he has travelled to Vienna, Moscow and Feiping.

8. LE DUAN (aka LE VAN DUAN), the political commissar of South Vietnam for the DRV, is one of the most influential and powerful men in the DRV hierarchy. He was born in Hue, Central Vietnam, in 1908 and may have been educated in the USSR. Reports of his activities in the pre-World War II period conflict. However, in 1945 the Viet Minh released him from French imprisonment on Poulo Condore. In 1948 he was sent to South Vietnam to control General NGUYEN Binh, the popular non-Communist DRV military leader. He condoned and may have en-

gineered NGUYEN Binh's assassination in 1951, which established LE as the leader of South Vietnam.

9. NGUYEN KHANH TOAN, has been deputy minister of education of the DRV since 1946 and is mainly responsible for the anti-illiteracy and mass education campaigns. Toan was born in 1903 in Thua Tien Province, North Vietnam, has traveled in France and was educated at Stalin University in Moscow. He is connected with the USSR-Vietnam Friendship Association. He has worked with Vietnamese Communists in Thailand and for many years has been an adviser to HO chi Minh on Communist affairs in Southeast Asia. It has been suggested that he is a top Moscow agent in Southeast Asia.

10. NGUYEN LUONG BANG (aka SAU DO, Red Star) is the first DRV ambassador to the USSR and one of the early leaders of Vietnamese Communism.

Bang was born in 1905 in Hai Duong Province, North Vietnam. In 1925 he helped HO organize the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League. Between 1925 and 1932 he plied between Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai, spreading propaganda, organizing Vietnamese Communist groups and spending a few short terms in jail. During this period he used the name SAU DO. In 1932 he was arrested by the French and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He escaped in 1943 in obedience to Viet Minh orders.

Bang held several positions in DRV circles between 1943 and 1951, including membership on the Commission to Draft the Constitution, serving with HO chi Minh, TRUONG Chinh and VO nguyen Giap. In 1951 he was named director-general of the newly-formed National Bank of Vietnam, the DRV's leading financial institution, because of his experience in handling party finances. In April 1952 he was appointed the first DRV ambassador to the USSR. Some reports indicate he may have had some training in Moscow before that date. In 1953, while in his current post, he attended the funeral of Klement Gottwald in Prague.

11. NGUYEN VAN TAO, the powerless minister of labor, is the only Cochinchinese member of the Lao Dong Party Politburo.

Tao was born in 1903 in Rach Gia Province, South Vietnam. During the 1920's he was in Paris, writing for the French Communist newspaper l'Humanite, and also may have spent some time in the USSR. He was arrested by the French in 1931 and sentenced to a short jail sentence. After serving his term, he was deported to Indochina. There he was elected to several local offices through support from a coalition of Communist and Trotskyite groups. After a split in the Indochinese Communist Party in 1939, he formed his own Marxist group.

Although Tao is very anti-French and anti-colonial, he is not an adherent of Moscow domination or of international Communism. This nationalist attitude has been manifested by many southern leaders

and is the reason many of them have fallen from grace in the DRV. Tao's own position is shaky because of his association with the southern leaders. In his official capacity he is completely overshadowed by HOANG quoc Viet, chairman of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor. Tao is now referred to as a dissolute old man, fond of wine, women and song. His days in the DRV hierarchy may be numbered.

12. NGUYEN XUAN THUY (aka XUAN THUY) is the propaganda chief-tain of the DRV. As editor of the DRV national newspaper Cuu Quoc (National Salvation) and Lao Dong Politburo member in charge of propaganda, he is the voice of the Viet Minh.

Although one of the youngest members of the Politburo, Thuy is a long time veteran of Communist activities in Indochina, having been arrested as a Communist agitator before he was 20. He was born in 1911 in Ha Dong Province, North Vietnam. He is a member of several "peace" and "friendship" organizations and has attended several "peace conferences," including meetings in Vienna, Moscow and Peiping.

13. Father PHAM BA TRUC, a Catholic priest, has been authorized by the Vietnamese Catholic hierarchy to cooperate with the DRV and, if necessary to protect the interests of his flock, to hold positions in the DRV government. He is not considered to be a dupe or hostage



of the Viet Minh, but to be doing what he believes best under the present circumstances. The Viet Minh has been anxious to use him and other priests to give an appearance of support from all segments of the Vietnamese community. He is a member of the Sino-Vietnamese Friendship Association and vice-president of the Permanent Committee of the National Assembly.

14. PHAM VAN DONG is deputy premier of the DRV, a member of the Supreme Council of National Defense and a close friend of HO chi Minh. He was born in 1906 in Quang Ngai Province, Central Vietnam, and has been a militant Communist since 1925, when he joined HO's Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League in China. So devoted is he to the cause of international Communism that he was suspicious of efforts to give the independence movement a more nationalistic appearance, retiring to secondary positions during those attempts.

Pham van Dong spent some time in France, where he worked with Thorez, and may have also worked in the USSR at one time. He has also served sentences in prison on the island of Pulo Condore. In 1946 he headed the delegation to the post-war French-Vietnamese conference at Fontainebleau. He is reputedly a skillful diplomat and a fanatically doctrinaire Communist.

15. PHAN ANH, DRV minister of national economy, is among the most prominent of the non-Communist Vietnamese nationalists who joined the DRV at its inception. He is still unwilling or unable to break away from that now wholly Communist-dominated regime, but he is now merely a figurehead. His deputy, a hard-core Communist, actually controls the ministry.

Anh was born in 1910 or 1912 in the province of Kien An, North Vietnam.

16. PHAN KE TOAI, since July 1947 the DRV minister of interior, is another prominent non-Communist. He was born in 1892 in Son Tay Province, North Vietnam, of a wealthy and well-known mandarin family. He entered government service in 1914 and was considered an able and just civil servant. In 1937 he was appointed governor of Bac Ninh Province, continuing to serve in that post under the Japanese occupation.

His current cooperation with the Viet Minh is believed to be based on fear. And the DRV is believed to be keeping him as a figurehead in the Interior Ministry to make use of his name and prestige. Communist assistants reportedly form all policy.

A period of education in France before World War I is Toai's only recorded trip outside Indochina.

17. TON DUC THANG is one of the "grand old men" of the Communist movement in Indochina. He was born in 1888 in Long Xuyen Province in South Vietnam. In his youth he engaged in revolutionary activities and organized strikes in the Saigon area. He fled to France in 1912 to avoid arrest, where he associated with extreme left-wing French revolutionary elements, possibly meeting HO chi Minh, who was active in French Communist circles at that time.

In the 1920's Thang returned to Indochina and joined HO's Revolutionary Youth League. In 1929 he was arrested by the French for Communist activities and sentenced to 20 years in prison on the island of Poulo Condore. When released in 1945, he returned to Indochina and became one of the founders of the Lien Viet League. He is still president of the popular front organization, which was designed to tone down the Viet Minh's Communist composition. In 1946, during the period of cooperation between HO and the French, he served in the National Assembly and went to France with a delegation from that body.

Thang was considered to be an "independent nationalist" until about 1949, when his status in Communist ranks became known. He has made several trips to China, usually at the head of "friendship" missions, and he is a strong advocate of Chinese Communist intervention in the Indochina conflict. In 1950 he was elected president of the USSR-Vietnam Friendship Association, a position which he still holds.

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